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VERSES
BY A SOLDIER
"OVER THERE"

R. MILL OLIVER
Australian Imperial Forces



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Book 2

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TO MY MOTHER

OCTOBER 3RD, 1917

YER 'oppin' over in the mornin'
An' I am left out 'ere,
I can't express me feelin's,
I. But in me 'eart it's clear;
I want ter be out wiv yer,
But fate 'as been so kind,
Wile yer 'op it in the mornin'
I am left be'ind.

I ain't no novel 'ero,
Yer often read about,
But when yer pals go up the line,
II. It 'urts ter be left out,
But it ain't no use of swankin'
Sayin' "I'd jest love ter be
Up where the shells is flyin' 'round;
Rest camp's no use ter me."

It ain't fer askin' of it,
That I am left out 'ere,
I want ter do me job wiv yer,
III. Fer me mer duty's clear,
I joined the boys ter deal out stouch
Fer every Gawd darned Hun,
An' 'elp the mother country
Ter get the job soon done.

I don't care w'ere I'm ordered,
Or what I'm told ter do,
Fer orders is jest orders—

- IV. That's why I'm not wive you,
But w'en yer 'oppin' over, boys,
Jest at the dawn o' day,
I'll be thinkin' of yer all,
An' ter Gawd I'll pray,

That 'e'll lend 'is kindly 'and,
Them good folk tork about,
An' give yer strength ter do yer job—

- V. That yer'll do it, I don't doubt,
Still it's good ter know there's someone
W'o watches over all,
An' that thort makes it easy
If yer 'ave ter fall.

Yer 'oppin' over in the mornin',
Yer all ain't comin' back;
Some of yer 'ave ter pay the price,

- VI. But yer courage will not slack,
Fer yer know Australia's never failed
In any job she's give ter do,
An' though this is a tuff un',
We'll see the thing right throo.

Yer 'oppin' over in the mornin'
An' I am left out 'ere;
I can't express me feelin's,
VII. But in me 'eart it's clear,
I want ter be out wive yer,
But fate 'as been so kind,
W'ile yer 'op in the mornin',
I am left be'ind.

HER SOLDIER BOY

IT SEEMS only yesterday, little boy,
Since you played with your soldiers of lead,
And left them lying about the floor,
When I had tucked you into your bed.

Battles were fought and won by you,
In your kiddish little way,
And what a proud mother it was who heard
Of your doings at close of day.

It seems an eternity, little boy,
Since you left me, to take a share
In the greatest game a man e'er played,
But it isn't a toy game over there.

It's a game that is only played by men,
And though, as man you do your part,
The little boy with his soldiers of lead
Will live in his mother's heart.

KING ALBERT'S REPLY

BENT, but not broken—
Robbed of my kingdom, but not my soul—
Which, high above the desolation wrought by you,
shall rise.

My cities all in ruins,
My people turned adrift,
But yet the day shall dawn,
And from the ruins be born,
A nation, staunch and true.

Crushed by the tyrant's foot,
But only for a while,
And then your answer shall be made
Not to man, but God who gave
His life, that man might live.

Despoiled of homes most dear,
My people still fight on,
And will till every Belgian son
Has seen the work nobly begun,
Ended, and peace again shall reign.

The country side shell torn
That once was passing fair,
And crops, that wavered in the sun,
Laid low by Kultur's cunning gun,
For your boasted freedom's cause.

Bled white of youth's fair flower,
That we might hold the way,
My country still can hold its head
Above its ruins, choosing instead
Death, to subjugation.

THE MEN OF AUSTRALIA

YOU who answered the call,
You to whom it was not in vain
The nation asked help from,
In her dire hour of pain,

You who left home behind,
Loved ones, and prospects too,
And took the chance fate gave,
And served your country true;

You who on Egypt's sands
Toiled 'neath the sweltering sun,
Learning the part of a man,
Though just a boy, many a one;

You who stormed the heights,
Of Gallipoli's steepest shore,
And held the crest you gained,
Though fate allowed no more;

You who for weeks did toil,
And at last the sacrifice made,
Giving your life, your all,
That Australia you might save;

You who in France still held
The honour, your brothers won
On that glorious April dawn,
'Neath 'Aegean's rising sun;

You who on the war-torn fields
Of France, and Belgium, too,
Have planted our Australian flag,
Our emblem of all that's true.

You are the men of Australia,
True sons of the Bulldog breed.

THE MOTHER

GOOD BYE, a mother's blessing go with you, my
son,

There's so much over there to do,
And it's little I have done
In giving you, my first-born,
To help the victory to be won,

I would not hold you back,
Though deep within my heart,
Unshed tears are welling,
Now the time has come to part.

I've nursed you through your baby ills,
And jealously watched you grow,
Fearing the pitfalls ahead of you,
When out to the world you'd go.

I've watched you play your baby games,
And can still hear your laugh of joy,
When with paper hat and wooden sword
You were my make-believe soldier boy.

But it's not a make-believe soldier now,
That fills his mother's heart with pride;
It's one of my country's soldier boys,
Who'll fight on Liberty's side.

Good bye—no, I'm not weeping;
My eyes fill with tears of joy,
When I think my country's keeping
Is in the hands of you—my boy.

THE HILLS OF ENGLAND

CLOTHED in their purple mists,
The distant hills appear
Like some royal chief of old,
Unflinching, staunch, austere,
Watching his armies at their games,
Resting the while, until the call
Of further conquest, stirs the heart of all.

So, noble hills of England's shore,
You gaze on us, the cubs,
Of your lion-hearted country,
Sons of Australia, that dear land
Adopted by our forebears long ago,
Learning in the shadows of your purple heights
How weaker nations—wronged—to right.

"THE CREDITORS"

EACH mother's son, who has given his life,
In Freedom's fight over there,
Each wooden cross, that points to the sky,
Demands that you do your share.

Each Belgian babe, that has lost it's home,
The fatherless, motherless, too,
Cry for succour, but not in vain,
For their cries are heard by you.

Each tender nurse, who mothers us
Back to health and strength again,
Can't work alone, she needs your help,
Though far from the field of pain.

Each dawn that rises sees on the tape
Your sons, waiting the word to go,
And when the barrage thunders down,
They have never faltered or gone too slow.

So each over here can do a share,
Though not in an active way,
Just buy a bond, and help to drive
To his den this beast of prey.

Drive to his den and across its door
The stone of Liberty roll,
And blot out the name that has blood stained
Civilization's sacred scroll.

MISSING

MISSING! God! what an eternity of fears
Swells in the hearts of loved ones,
And yet, to some a gleam of hope appears;
It cannot mean that he has gone,
And n'er again we'll see the smile,
Or hear the song of him we loved so well.

Missing! The days drag on, and yet
We cannot, and we shall not believe
That God in heaven would let
Us hope against hope;
Far sooner, than these days of dread,
Our loved one had been numbered—with the dead.

FATIGUE

NOTE: All work, outside actual Military work, is called
"Fatigue" in the Army.

FATIGUE—fatigue—fatigue,
Mornin', noon and night,
Cartin' duck boards 'ere
Luggin' ammunition there,
Fillin' sand bags,
Bringin' rations,
Of fatigues
There's many fashions,
W'en yer fightin' over there.

Fatigue—fatigue—fatigue
In an' out the line.
We always damn the job we're on,
We curse the hours that seem so long,
Puttin' up barbed wire,
Sometimes under fire.
Still yer love the life,
W'en yer fightin' over there.

Fatigue—fatigue—fatigue
In all kinds o' weather,
Muck an' slush over yer knees,
An' many trifles such as these
Are the soldiers lot,
But 'e don't care a jot,
'E'll get a rest in billets,
When 'e's not fightin' over there.

Fatigue—fatigue—fatigue
'Tis the infantry's job,
But I wouldn't change foot sloggin'
For a soft cop, or nice toggin'
Of a job behind the line.
W'en it gets to zero time,
'Tis the best job of the lot,
Foot sloggin' o'er the top,
W'en yer fightin' over there.

THE BELGIAN BABIES APPEAL

YOUR cities stand unshattered,
Your women undefiled;
No mother's heart need send a prayer
To God to spare her child,
As peacefully it rests,
From death that oft infests
The skies, o'er cities over there.

Your men have gone to do their share,
You're proud of them, we know;
But turn a thought once in awhile
To Belgium clothed in snow;
Think of the babe, the wee outcast,
Homeless, and facing winter's blast,
With your own in comfort here.

Picture the home you love so well,
With its garden's blooming flowers,
And baby laughter making bright
The sunny noontide hours,
Destroyed, by shot and shell,
From incarnate fiends of hell,
Who boast the aid of God.

Picture your men to slav'ry driven,
Your daughters, torn from your side,
And the tiny babe you love well
Cast on the world's full tide,

By them who do not care
What future years may bear,
For a sacrifice to Kultur.

A sacrifice to Kultur, do you think,
For a moment, what this means?
A tiny life that once did fill
Fond parents' proudest dreams;
But you can help, we know you will,
That baby life can be saved still,
If you lend a helping hand.

So when in comfort on your hearth,
Your baby's "crow" and "goo"
Stirs tender feeling in your heart,
Think what 'twould mean to you
To see its mutilated form,
To hear the Uhlans laugh of scorn,
As for its life you begged.

But to you they will not beg in vain,
Their cries have reached you here;
Just give a cent, 'twill help to save
A babe, to some one dear,
And to a life a start you'll give,
That in future years shall live,
To bless your country's name.

HER CROSS.

I WOULD not be a mother
Did I not grieve my loss,
But I would not be a patriot
Did I not bear my cross,
And carry on.

I would not be a woman
If my heart did not break,
But I'm proud to know he died
For my country's freedom sake,
So I must carry on.

It's hard at times to smile,
With heart that nearly breaks,
When the first-born son to you,
Death—in his boyhood takes,
But I must carry on.

He was brave, so I must be,
He would not have me weep.
And the trust he placed in me,
Though not here now, I'll keep,
And carry on.

TO A BOOK OF "AUSTRALIAN BUSH
BALLADS"

WHAT do you bring back, little book?
To a soldier over here,
Who is trying to do his little bit
For the cause he holds so dear?

What do I see as I read the verse
In my dug-out, all alone,
What do I hear, in the lilting rhyme,
That brings back the Southern home?

The rustle of gum leaves in the breeze,
The scent of the wattle bloom,
The crack of the stock whip, and the song
Of the bush-birds, through the gloom.

The old bush tracks I learned to love,
As I wondered there alone;
The cloudless vault of heaven above,
And the trapper's old bark home.

The little creek that babbles along
Through luxuriant maiden hair,
And o'er the pebbles making a song
In keeping with nature there.

The crickets' whistle at eventide,
When nature seems at rest,
And those sweet voices of the night
That, with our bushland, has been blest.

These are the visions, little book,
You lovingly bring to me,
And far from the Bush I wander,
'Tis where my heart will ever be.

AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER'S GRAVE

“**A**N unknown soldier lies here”;
These words, and nothing more,
Mark the resting-place of a hero,
Who left his home-land shore,
To answer the call of England.

Pause as you pass on your way,
At that little rough-hewn cross,
And though to you he's unknown,
Somebody bears the loss,
Of the soldier lying there.

Someone who watched him grow,
From boyhood into a man,
And smiled as they saw him go
To answer the call—for who can
Hold back loved ones then?

Nature with poppies red and white,
Has covered his resting-place,
Red for the blood of his comrades flowing,
White for the future they are sowing,
For mankind in after years.

ON THE TAPE

WILL the dawn ne'er waken?
Will the guns ne'er speak?
The opening words of the barrage,
Crouched here in shell holes,
The moments with leaden feet,
Creep to the zero time.

Why do I tremble so?
Surely craven fear is not mine,
As I think what an hour might bring.

Ah! see the dawn lingers as if
Fearing to rise, and rising,
Will gaze on forms so cold and stiff.
The dawn is here—the barrage down;
We're moving at last, thank God!
It was not fear that seized my heart;
'Twas only waiting for the start.

THE JOKER

'T WAS an outpost position,
A shell hole of yesterday.
We had taken the ridge in good style.
Our foe had not waited,
He had got clean away,
And was leaving us quiet for awhile.

So we improved our shell hole,
With the few men we had,
The remains of a Lewis gun section,
And the company's joker
Was making us glad
With his yarns, and he had some selection.

The morning soon passed.
It was just after noon
When the zip of a sniper was heard,
We were soon all alert,
For it seemed quite a boon,
The first sign that Fritzzy had stirred.

Our sentry gazed 'round,
"Could see nothing," he said.
Again came the zip, it was closer this time.
"The blighter's seen something,
Or I'll eat my head,"
Said the joker, with his usual smile.

“Gee, that reminds me
Of a yarn,” so to tell
One of his stock, he stood and peered 'round
The zip came again,
And the joker he fell—
And never stirred as he lay on the ground.

TO A DEAR FRIEND

'TIS no use, you and I, my friend,
Blending our lives together,
For we are different as night and day,
And if we go on 'twill end one way,
So 'tis best we part forever.

Think me not hard, dear friend o' mine,
For it hurts that we should part,
But 'tis better to end it here and now;
Better for both, but to me somehow
I can't say all that's in my heart.

You are the only pal I've had
That I've loved as dear as life,
But now the crossway dimly appears,
Let us be staunch, that in future years
There'll be no regrets or strife.

You take your path and I'll take mine;
'Twill be hard at first, I know,
Without your cheery word, old pard,
When things are going a wee bit hard,
But 'tis better it should be so.

We've had some jolly times together,
That will ever be dear to me,
You have shown me how to act a man,
But to part now! 'tis the better plan.
Don't ask why it should be so.

TO TABLE MOUNTAIN, CAPE TOWN

MOUNTAIN clothed in mists that gently rise,
As the dawn reddens in the eastern skies,
And in the austere majesty of years
You gaze upon us, mankind full of fears.

Fears as to the future we all gaze,
Which to our eyes appear in haze,
As you great mount appear at dawn;
But as the sun the mist dispels,
So staunch endeavour in our life
Dispels the mist, that veils the light
Of the future that we feared.

Staunch endeavour in all we do,
So, mountain, may we be as you,
Steadfast, unflinching, as through life we go,
For mists may hide, but for awhile,
A future white as snow.

LIFE'S CROSS-WAYS

OF I look back on those youthful days,
When at life's cross-road I gazed down the ways,
Wondering which pathway to take
At the end of which, my mark I'd make.
But the roads were many, and as 'tis said
To put on young shoulders a world-wise head
'Tis hard, so I chose my path alone.

But whither it leads, I know not where,
The world for the fledgling has no care;
Your heart must be staunch, for the fight is long,
And the road-way is rough, and opponents strong;
But to look back is to lose your way.

So to face the furrow my plough's begun,
To reach the end ere the setting sun
Of life sinks low in the west,
This must I do, though at times I think
My task's too hard, and I almost shrink
From my plough, as I gaze ahead.

But, though rough the road-way be,
Love lends a hand, and so to me
This kindly hand has made,
My rocky road a smiling glade,
With roses where the stones once were,
And skies of blue above.

TO THE LITTLE MOTHER

AND SO, dear little sister mine,
A woman's blessing most divine
Has come to thee.
And snuggling to your breast,
As a fledgling to its nest,
Is God's greatest gift.

A baby small is given to thee,
The greatest gift of all, that we
Might understand God's love.
Tiny though this life may seem,
In it reflects the radiant beam
Of Love divine.

A little heart that beats for you,
With love that's deeper and more true
Than any of mankind.
A little mind that has no thought,
Not knowing why it has been brought
Into this world of ours.

This little treasure, sister mine,
It is the bond of love divine
'Tween you and him.
So cherish it, I know you will,
'Tis but a little while until
Your babe will be a man.

'Tis but a little while, and then
He'll take his place among the men
Of this great world.
So with your mother's love so deep,
Keep his tiny toddling feet
In the way you'd have them go.

TO E. R.

WHAT right have I?
Save that when we met
A glance came to your eye;
And yet, it may have been
My soul was stirred,
And I imagined the unspoken word.

What right have I?
I ask, but not in vain,
For surely we shall meet again,
May be my hope is just a dream,
To end where it began,
With just, "it might have been."

TO THE "WORK-A-DAY" MAN

YOU'VE shouted "The Star Spangled Banner"
'Til your throats are bricky dry,
And your cheers for the boys who went away
Resounded to the sky.
You've watched the map in the papers,
And you've read the news with a thrill,
But does it occur to you, "work-a-day" man,
There is something else to do still?

You've sent the Kaiser down to hell,
At the moving picture show.
You've wished the boys good luck, God speed,
As from your cities you saw them go,
You've decked your machines with service flags,
And the good Old Glory too,
And perhaps you're wond'ring if there is
Anything more to do.

A thrill of pride rings in your voice,
As you speak of the valiant deeds,
That Sammy's doing over there,
But there's something else he needs;
You've knitted him sox and mufflers,
He wants them we know full well,
But in Christmas parcels you cannot pack
The Hun's issue of shot and shell.

You've sent him smokes; he loves them,
For there's nothing will pass the time
Better than wooing fair Nicotine
When a chap is holding the line,
But we hold a line no longer
The Allemand's on the run,
So send him an issue of S. A. A.
As a Christmas gift for the Hun.

You've no need to get permission
To send this Christmas box,
Just buy a bond and Sam will see
That Fritz gets the result in his socks.
And so when the show is over,
And Sammy comes back again,
He'll know that the trust he planted
In Mr. Work-a-day Man was not vain.

NOTE: S. A. A., Small Arm Ammunition.



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